

Loophole

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Summary: Halo and Mass Effect Crossover. Follows Petty Officer Kieran O'Rourke from REACH to Earth, but not quite the way he remembered it.

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1. Chapter One: Unexpected

I never expected this to happen, hell, we never even expected the Covenant.

The UNSC had been at war with the Covenant, at least, that's what we called them, for several years now. I had enlisted, much to my family's distress, just before Reach was invaded. I trained to be a Navy pilot, I had always wanted to fly Pelicans. It looked so damn easy, and fun. Damn was I wrong. I mean yeah I passed through training with flying colors, was even asked to fly Longswords for the UNSC Marines, but I turned down the offer, really liked my Pelican. Point is it wasn't easy, or fun. Well, that's not entirely true, it definitely was fun, even when it was boring, though it was hell during a mission, but when you came back, damn, you'd laugh your ass off at all the ridiculous things you thought. I mean, nothing is more exhilarating than to be shot at without result. And then you'd get all somber and quiet, especially when you were the first back. You'd be sitting there in the hangar bay for several minutes, each one like an eternity, waiting for your wing men to come in. Sometimes, they didn't, and that made you all the quieter. Last mission we went on was quiet, all hush-hush, Navy didn't even tell us the whole damn story right about ten minutes before we left. And even then you knew they were leaving things out, important things.

They had been calling it a routine mission, but fuck it, everything is routine until the bullets start flying, once that happens, nothing ever goes by the book. The brass had told us to suit up, make sure our birds were in fine order, fueled up and loaded. Said we were going to drop a contingent of Marines at a nearby OP. Then when I was

just about to load up into my Pelican I noticed there were 5 Spartans in the Hangar bay, all quiet, sittin' there, keeping their thoughts to themselves, one of 'em was sharpening a knife, like he was working off his nerves. But I had never thought of Spartans as being human, so I couldn't fathom him trying to work off pre-battle nerves. I shook my head at the thought and kept walking to my bird. When I looked up I saw my buddy Ken standing outside my Pelican in his flight suit. He tilted towards the Spartans.

"You think we're transporting them?" Ken asked.

"Damn, I hope not." I replied looking over to the five Spartans.

"Yeah? Why's that?" He inquired.

"Fuck Ken, if I got shot down and my bird didn't make it, killed all five Spartans, I might've just lost the war for us." I said.

"Shit, you really think these Spartans are that good, huh?"

"Have you seen them fight?" I asked. "I was flying this here Pelican as Air support, saw one of 'em, ONE of 'em, damn near kill an entire company of Jackals. Tell me that if we lose these five guys there won't be serious implications."

"Alright, you've made your point, only thing you've done though is made me nervous."

I laughed at that, "We've got nothing to worry about I'm sure, we'll be behind friendly lines the whole damn time."

"That's another thing I wanted to ask you about." Ken said.

I was a little intrigued, Ken scratched his left forearm, where he had this really pale white scar. He'd crashed during flight school and a piece of the console almost tore his arm apart. He only ever scratched his scar when he was nervous. And hell he was scratching it now.

"You think-" He started, "I-We-You think they're telling the truth? I mean, first they tell us that we're taking a small group of marines to the frontlines. Which I thought was legitimate, but shouldn't they be here by now?" He leaned forward, "I mean we're due to leave in fifteen minutes. Not to mention that there are five Spartans sitting in our Hangar Bay right now. Shit Kieran, our Pelicans are the only two aircraft not in repairs or stored below deck. Now tell me something's not going on." He leaned back against my Pelican arms crossed.

I thought about it for a moment, looked around, noticed, for the first time, the bay was empty, 'cept for those Spartans and our Pelicans.

"Ok, you may be right," I said "But comon the brass wouldn't lie to us, maybe they just slipped up the message, wrote 'Rines stead of Spartans."

Ken turned around and stared out the hangar bay into the world beyond, "Damnit, you can't accpet the facts huh." Ken laughed.

I chuckled to myself, "I guess not, let's call it blind obedience?"

Suddenly I heard a slight cough behind me, Ken and I whirled around to see the five Spartans standing right beside us. I felt my heart beating much faster than normal. I stared in shock, how could five men and women, wearing armor that weighed about as much as my Pelican walk so silently?

"Shit! What the fuck man! What's with the silence!" Ken yelled.

"I'm sorry, we didn't mean to alarm you," one of them said. "You about ready to go?"

"Uh, y-y-yeah," I stammered, "L-let me just grab my helmet."

I ran over to the work bench picked up my helmet and put it on, running back I saluted. "Ready to go sir."

He returned the salute and followed me into the Pelican. I shook my head as I remembered I had just saluted someone of a lower rank. Then again, these guys had so many medals, their chests were practically covered. Then I realized something. I stopped in front of the troop bay door and turned to face the Spartan. "Wait, why two Pelicans?" I asked "You only need one to take you five to the front. So what's the point?"

Then out of nowhere four UNSC marines showed up. "Hey, don't forget us!" One of them shouted as they jogged across the expanse of the Hangar bay. I looked over at Ken and smirked.

"What'd I tell you Ken, The Brass don't lie to us." I teased.

"Aw Shut up Kieran." He said.

The lead Spartan turned to me "Who do you want to fly to the LZ?" He asked.

"Marines," I said almost instantly, "No offense sir, I'd just be nervous flying you five to the front."

The Spartan went to scratch his head, then remembered his helmet was in the way and lowered his hand to his side. "They didn't tell you yet? We're not goin' to the front, you're taking us behind enemy lines."

I sighed "I don't want to hear it Ken," I said as I put my hand up.

"Alright, but I did tell you."

The Spartan nodded to me and walked over to Ken's Pelican as Ken climbed into the cockpit. I looked over to the Marines, they had just showed up, and paused a moment to catch their breath. Then one of them looked up, "Cpl. Williams, sir." He saluted. I returned their salute and climbed into the cockpit, the Marines followed me into the Troop Bay and strapped in. I gunned the engines up and turned my mic on.

"Welcome to Reach International Air, I'll be your pilot this afternoon. For those of you with our frequent flier program you'll be getting two hundred points this afternoon. I also want to remind you that the UNSC designates this as a Smoke-Free Pelican. Please buckle in back there and lift your trays up, as we'll be taking off shortly."

I smiled as I heard the marines laugh in the back. I eased up on the throttle and lifted the Pelican off the Hangar Bay deck. I looked across at Ken as he did the same, he looked over and waved at me, we turned simultaneously to face the hangar bay exit. I led the way out as Ken followed. I heard the comm system beep in my ear as Ken opened a channel between us.

"Hey Kieran, just wanted to point out you owe me a fucking c-note when we get back."

"Fuck Ken, touch my wallet and I'll kill you."

"Roger that Phantom."

"Shut up Ghost and watch what you're doing."

"I see my altimeter Phantom, I know what I'm doing."

"Yeah, right, you're just about five feet off the Hangar deck."

"Just lead us out of the bay."

In response I pushed the throttle to the max and left Ken behind. Laughing as I watched Ken's Pelican struggle behind me, we had upgraded our birds separately. I had gone for speed and control, he went for the dual nose gun and reinforced plating. I left him behind in the Hangar as I exited the Carrier and entered Reach's atmosphere. I looked around for hostiles, even though I knew it was unlikely seeing as I had just left a UNSC carrier, but hell, you never knew, right? As I looked around the chin gun on my Pelican moved with me.

"Hey, Ghost, where'd ya go?" I asked.

"Phantom, make one more joke about my Pelican being slow and I will ram you." He replied.

"Yeah, if you can catch me." I laughed into the intercom.

"Damn you Phantom."

Out of nowhere I heard a screech as a Longsword passed by extremely close on either side of me. Rocking my Pelican a little bit. I heard a feminine voice over the channel as one of the Longsword pilots connected. I heard Ken curse silently as he fought to steady his craft.

"Morning boys, what brings you out of the Hangar on this fine day?" chimed the Longsword pilot as she came back up on my right.

"What the fuck Anne?" I yelled. I heard the marines laughing in the back, they were in the channel too? When'd they join?

"Dammit Anne, I'm still trying to steady my plane!" Ken shouted.

"What, I can't have a little fun?" Anne asked. "Besides, it's your own damn fault for adding two times the amount of armor. Makes your pelican damn heavy, and hard to maneuver."

"Thank you!" I exclaimed.

"Dammit Kieran, I'm going to hit you so hard when we get back in." Ken said.

"Hey Anne, who's the other guy?" I asked.

"Who, her?" she replied, " She's the new girl, say hello to you best friend Kieran, she'll be following you around all of the time."

"I already have a wingman," I pointed out, " as slow as he is."

"Dammit Kieran!" Ken interjected.

I heard laughter over the comms as the other Longsword pilot laughed.

"Pleased to meet you Kieran, name's Jess." She laughed.

I looked over to my right and saw Jess wave at me. I nodded to her and looked forward again. Checking my mission clock I saw that we were only five minutes out. Damn, we had a long way to go still.

"Kieran, don't you have manners?" Anne asked.

"Wha-, oh sorry Jess, I just realized how much further we have to go. Kinda wished it got a little more exciting." I said.

I looked back over to my left and saw that Jess had gone. I looked around, straining to find her to no avail. Then I found her as she roared overhead, shaking my Pelican then looping back around underneath me and rolling to my left. I struggled to steady my Pelican and I heard Ken cursing over the comm channel.

"You just had to complain didn't you?" Ken said. I turned to look at him and I saw his craft shaking. I started laughing along with the Marines in the back. They hadn't stopped laughing since we left Ken behind in the Hangar. I smiled, then remembered the Spartans, they hadn't spoken, or laughed during the entire flight. Damn, they were almost inhuman.

Suddenly I got a dot on my radar. My systems weren't tagging it as friendly. I started straining around to see it. But there wasn't anything besides us four up in the sky at that moment. I shrugged it off and logged it as a phantom dot.

"Hey Kieran, you got a reading on your radar?" Ken called in.

Shit, Ken had seen it too, what are the odds of that if it were a phantom dot?

"Damn, I was hoping that it was a phantom do t but now that you got it, I'm a little worried." I replied.

"You boys have got to quit worryin'. You've got two of the Navy's best Longsword pilots on your six, you're fine." Anne reassured.

"Little confident there, aren't you?" Ken asked.

"Well when you're the best you're the best, right Anne?" Jess chimed in.

"You got that right Jes-" Anne began, "Kieran look out you got a bogey on your six!"

"Evasive maneuvers!" I barked into the mic. "Hang on back there!"

I swerved my Pelican to the left as a string of plasma streaked across the sky towards me. I rolled the Pelican to dodge the next salvo.

"Jess! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU!" I screamed.

"I can't get a clear shot Kieran, if I miss you might be the one on the ground!" Jess yelled.

"TAKE HIM OUT DAMMIT I CAN'T SHAKE HIM!" I yelled frantically.

I rolled the Pelican to the right and then made dove. The banshee on my tail followed suit. I swerved to the right trying to shake the bastard and he just mimicked me. Another string of plasma raced towards me as I got perilously close to the ground.

"Kieran, now'd be a good time to pull up than any." Ken said worriedly.

I rolled again to dodge the plasma and watch them streak by, temporarily blinding me. I clenched my teeth and started to feel the Pelican shudder as I tried to hold the dive. The marines in the back were silent now. I looked back behind me and saw the banshee was closing in.

"Jess if you don't take the shot he's going to rake my bird!" I yelled.

I pulled the Pelican out of its dive, the gee's pushing me back into my seat.

"No can do Kieran, I don't want to risk it." Jess replied.

"Fuck it, if you won't take him out, I will!" I shouted back.

"That's a transport craft, you can't-" Anne said.

"Watch me!" I yelled.

I looped over and back behind the banshee. The elite flying the banshee tried to mimick what I did but before he could even pull his

banshee up I depressed the trigger on my joystick and watched as the banshee began to flame and plummeted to the ground.

"YEAH! That's right you fucker!" I shouted. "What! You want to mess with me? Well fuck you!"

The marines in the back laughed in relief, and the corporal came in over the comm.

"Sir, as fun as that was, let's not do that again, you almost made me throw up." He complained.

"Damn, why don't you fly Longswords?" Jess asked.

"Don't want to." I answered "Thanks for the help by the way."

"Sorry, but I might've killed you." She responded.

I eased up on the throttle and headed back to Ken and Anne.

"You guys are a big help." I said as I returned.

"You're welcome." Ken waved.

I heard a chime in my headset after about fifteen minutes, signaling that someone was entering our channel.

"Who the hell-" Ken started.

"Listen up, we need those five Spartans at OP BRAVO ECHO NINER. Do you copy? Over." a voice said.

"On who's authority over?" Ken asked.

"Admiral Whitcomb's, authorization code SENDER GREEN. Over."

"Shit, that's got to be real." I said to Ken.

"Roger, OP BRAVO ECHO NINER." Ken said.

"What the fuck?" I spoke aloud.

"What?" Ken asked.

"Check OP Bravo Echo Niner on your Nav system." I said.

"What the fuck?"

"Right? What the fuck happened to behind enemy lines?"

"Why can't the Brass figure out a mission before they send us on one?"

"Ken, I have no damned clue."

"Well, at least that's where we were headed in the first place."

After plugging in BRAVO ECHO NINER into my NAV system, it had

overlapped with my preset NAV point. Meaning that the five Spartans were being dropped off at the Outpost where we were supposedly dropping off a small contingent of marines. It made no fucking sense, but I guess that's just it, right? FUBAR, fucked up beyond all reason.

The rest of the flight was quiet, nothing happened, besides Ken and I making fun of each other's Pelicans. We got to the outpost with no problem, refueled, I was the only one who had to rearm. The Marines got out of the Pelican, thanked me for not getting them killed and went to find their CO. The Spartans left without a word. Left Ken's Pelican as soon as the hatch opened and walked away, not another word.

"That was odd." Ken said.

"Well, like I said, it's just a simple routine drop-off." I said.

"Yeah, and there was only one," I said. "Kinda makes you think, don't it? Why would there be only one banshee? And I know the Covvies are big one bravery, but that was just plain dumb."

"You think too much Kieran." Ken laughed as he strapped his helmet on. "Alright, let's get out of here."

"Right behind you." I said as I jumped into my cockpit and pulled my helmet over my head.

"Jess and Anne are in the air already," Ken said. "They're waiting for us."

He pointed up to the two Longswords circling over head. I warmed the thrusters up and brought the craft off the ground. Soon as I was clear of the buildings that made up the outpost are gunned my Pelican into the sky.

"You girls ready to go home?" I called.

"Kieran, we should wait for Ken, he's not off the ground yet." Teased Anne.

"Soon as I get back I'm getting rid of this armor, stop making fun of me." Ken replied.

We were ten minutes out when I spotted a few blips on my radar.

"You going to tell me those are phantom dots again?" I asked Ken.

"Hell no, I can see 'em." Ken replied, "There's five coming up on your 7."

"Hey Jess, wanna go say hello to our friends?" Anne asked.

"Sure thing Anne." Jess replied as they sped past us and broke off in either direction.

The banshees started closing in as I looked around for Jess and Anne. I strained my head in either direction. I looked over my left

shoulder and saw the banshees racing towards Ken and I.

"You feeling a little lonely?" I asked Ken.

"Yeah, and a little grateful I got this armor." He responded.

I felt a cold sweat coming on. I mean yeah, I could get one banshee, maybe two, but Ken and I were sitting ducks right now, no clouds, nothing just open sky. Some might call it a beautiful day, but to me, hell there was nowhere to hide. I looked over my shoulder, man those banshees were ugly. Worse was, they were spitting plasma at us now.

"Ken roll to the right!" I commanded. At the same time I pulled my joystick to the left and rolled in the opposite direction. The plasma bolts raced by. Ken and I both dove for the ground and we held our Pelicans low to the ground, denying the Elites a shot as best we could. We both snaked our way around small hills and some isolated trees.

"Where the hell did those two go?" Ken shouted.

As if in answer we heard an explosion as one of the banshees was worked over by the Longsword pilots. Then another exploded as the other fighter walked her rounds into the enemy craft. Leveling out behind the three remaining banshees Anne opened up on the lead craft as Jess fired one of her missiles into the middle of one of the banshees. The third craft rolled to the left and narrowly dodged Anne's rounds. The craft leveled and the Elite gunned the throttle gaining on Ken and I. When it was about two hundred yards behind us it opened up again. Anne and Jess had started firing on it but neither one score a hit. Plasma bolts started streaking by as I rolled to the left. I felt a shudder and alarm started blaring in my helmet.

"Kieran! Kieran! You're tail's somking, you alright?" Ken shouted.

"Fuck this!" I shouted back.

"Talk to me Kieran, what's going on in there?"

"I don't know power failure, he hit something critical, looks like he cut one of the main lines. Ken, I don't think I can bring my girl home." I responded.

"Don't say that dammit, don't say that!" Ken yelled.

"This is Echo-1-7 signing out." I stated flatly, I was surprisingly calm.

I was losing altitude, and fast. The cockpit was flashing red, alarms were wailing in my ear and the Pelican was shuddering.

"Kieran, shut the fuck up, you'll be fine!" Ken yelled.

"It was an honor serving with you Ken." I said.

"Fuck!"

I was struggling with the controls, trying to find someplace that was flat, a place where I might survive the crash, though with the failure's and a gas leak, I knew I was dead if I touched the ground. I turned around to look at the bastard that did this to me. The Elite that took my life from me. I saw the enemy banshee speed up again and he was right behind me when he entered...slipspace? Whatever it was it tore a hole in the fabric of space and time and I fell right through. The alarms fell silent and the lights in the cockpit dimmed. Then they started blaring again, louder than ever. The warning lights came on and began to flash red. The Pelican was vibrating so badly. My teeth were chattering. I put a strip of cloth in my mouth and clenched my teeth hard. I closed my eyes and prayed to God that I'd make it through, somehow forgetting my calm acceptance from before. The Pelican came to a jarring stop. I felt contact with something hard. The craft skidded along...metal? Some sort of floor?

I opened my eyes and looked around. I had definitely crash landed somewhere. But where? I had never seen anything like this, it looks like I had crashed in a park. Which made no sense, I had been flying over sparsely wooded areas. And then it dawned on me, I had landed _inside _something.

2. Chapter Two: Crash

I had just crash landed in a completely foreign area. I had managed somehow to go from an area with few trees and rolling hills to what seemed like an indoor park with lakes. Everything was made of a white metal, nothing like the curved purple and blue metal the covenant liked to use.

I ran a systems diagnostic while looking around the cockpit. My assault rifle was still in one piece, good I might need that. I found my extra magazines taped under the console, right where I left 'em. I picked up the rifle and ripped the charging handle back. An alarm chimed in my helmet, telling me the system diagnostic had been completed. But at the moment, that didn't seem to matter. Because as I looked up I noticed for the first time a crowd of aliens were gathering.

"Oh fuck this." I thought aloud.

However, as I looked around, it seemed none of them had any weapons. Then I saw what looked like a squadron of Elites. But no, their head was different, close, they had mandibles, but not quite the same. They started to push the crowd back as two walked forward, weapons raised. I started to panic. I unbuckled myself from the seat and went to lift the hatch, but realized it was jammed. The two bipedals got closer and closer. I start punching the release button, it wasn't working. I slammed my fist down on the console.

I looked around the cockpit again, trying to find my magnum, something I could use to break the window. I found the magnum's grip and stretched to grab it, but when I pulled it up all I got was the grip and a magazine. I threw it back down. I picked up my rifle again and tried to maneuver the stock in front of the glass, but I couldn't move my assault rifle past my knees. One of the aliens crouched and held his rifle sighted on me while the other approached.

Frantically I pulled the trigger on my rifle, hoping that the glass

was shattered enough to break and not deflect the bullets as it was supposed too. It worked, but it also sent the aliens into a frenzy, the crowd ran in the opposite direction and the two armed men scattered for cover. I grabbed the two mags and flung myself out of the cockpit and took cover as best I could. One of the aliens started to shout something, my helmet ran through all the known languages and came up blank. I had no clue as to what he was saying.

I raised my rifle from out of cover and took two shots, just random, but I was hoping just to keep their heads down. I ducked back down behind my Pelican and looked around, trying to find something that might help me. Besides the aliens running away from my vehicle all I saw was a lake a few trees and a bridge. Then four more of the Elite-looking creatures arrived, coming from the other side of the bridge. Each one carrying something similar to what the other two had. Except, one of them was holding a longer rifle, almost like an S99. Then I saw a human, or more importantly a Spartan, appear on the bridge. I yelped in joy, and then realized he might not be here to help.

The creatures I had initially shot at were shouting something again. I lifted my head above cover and saw that one of them was gesturing to me, like he was commanding the others. I fired my rifle again. That seemed to shut him up.

It was strange though, they all had weapons too, why were they not shooting? I remember being told by my instructor various rules of engagement, such as fire if fired upon. That's usually what everyone did. Even the covenant did the same, not a lot of course, they usually just charged. But why weren't they shooting? The four that came over from the bridge definitely had a clear shot at me. The one with the sniper rifle definitely could've ended my life if he had wanted to. So what were they waiting for?

That damned creature had started shouting again, but this time they were approaching, all of them. Well the sniper had stayed behind and had a clear shot. The Spartan was in the lead, in a crouch, moving cautiously, gun up at all times. The other five blue-uniformed creatures fanned out behind him rifles raised. They were advancing slowly, and I was running out of options. I had heard of men fighting to the end, and damn I respected them. But somehow, faced against six armed men and I having only three mags I threw in the towel.

The moment I stepped out of cover they all froze up. I had my rifle over my head. I kept my right hand in the air as I bent down and placed my rifle on the floor. I lifted my left hand back in the air and kicked the rifle away. One of the creatures ran over to it and secured it. I knelt down with my hands behind my head as the Spartan ran forward and secured my hands with something I couldn't see.

He still hadn't spoken, but then again, I had rarely heard a Spartan speak. The Spartan led me away from my Pelican. I turned to get one last look at it. She was beaten pretty badly, her left thruster was completely gone, and her right was burnt black. The tail had scorch marks all over it. And the nose was all torn up, how I had survived makes no sense. The left wing had almost been torn off. The "Elites" were in front of us as the Spartan led me over the Bridge.

"Who the hell are you?" I asked the Spartan. "And where the fuck am I?"

The Spartan turned to me and he used his free hand to touch his helmet. His visor cleared and I saw a pair of silver eyes behind them.

"I'm John Shepard, a Citadel Spectre." The man said.

"A what?" I asked.

"A Spectre," he said. "Who are you? And where are you from?"

"I'm Petty Officer Kieran O'Rourke, sir. I was born on Earth, but I guess I'm from Reach. It's where I was stationed anyway." I replied.

"Reach? What the hell is Reach?" The Spartan asked.

I was astonished, weren't all Spartans trained on Reach? Weren't they all trained since they were six on the UNSC's most powerful base? How could this man, who was most definitely a Spartan II, not know about Reach?

"How can you be a Spartan II and not know what Reach is?" I asked. "Reach is the UNSC's most powerful military stronghold, other than Earth of course."

"Spartan II?" The man asked.

"Holy shit, who the hell are you?" I replied.

"I told you, I'm John Shepard, a Citadel Spectre." He replied. "What the hell is a Spartan II?"

"A Spartan II is a super soldier of the UNSC." I said incredulously. "Ok, even if you aren't a Spartan II you must've heard of them!"

Ignoring what I said he asked what the UNSC was. I was stunned, this man was most definitely a Spartan II, but he denied it. He even acted like he had never heard of them, and now he was asking what the UNSC was? There is no way, not a chance in hell he couldn't know what the UNSC was. It was the fucking military of Earth, of Reach, of every human colonized world. How could he not know what the UNSC was? How could he not know? Unless... No that was impossible.

Ignoring the last Spartan's inquiry I stopped. Causing him to stop too.

"What year is it?" I asked.

"2185, why?"

How is that even possible, if anything I had imagined to have gone into the future. But in the past? Wait, no, that's not right. If I had gone back in time then why had I never heard of this place? And why did everything else look so advanced? Their rifles made mine look primitive.

The "Elites" had stopped and walked back over. They said something to Shepard.

"Don't worry about it, I'll handle him." Shepard said.

One of the creatures opened his mouth to argue, but Shepard just waved him on. The alien just shrugged and moved on. Shepard turned back to look at me.

"You alright?" Shepard asked.

Was I alright? I was neither in the future or in the past, I had somehow drifted into an alternate universe. How could I be fine knowing that most likely there was no way out of this.

"Y-yeah," I lied. "I'm fine. I just..." my voice trailed away.

Then a huge alien came into view, walking over to us. I took a step back, and I fell. The thing looked like a small Hunter, minus the arm cannon and shield. It spoke to Shepard in a rough voice.

"I don't know Grunt, he just appeared out of nowhere and landed here in the Presidium, so I checked it out." Shepard said.

Shepard looked down at me, and extended a hand. I looked at the proffered hand for a moment, then at the dinosaur looking alien and grabbed his hand.

"This is Petty Officer Kieran O'Rourke, Grunt." Shepard said, evidently introducing me to the mini Hunter. The alien nodded, I nodded back, still afraid the Hunter might charge me at any moment.

"Shepard," I said quietly, "What the hell is that?"

The creature grunted in distaste when I had finished my question.

"That is Grunt, he's a Krogan," Shepard informed me. "And this lazy bastard approaching us right now is a Turian."

"A what? What the hell's a Krogan?"

The Krogan spoke in its rough voice and jabbed a finger at his chest.

"I'm guessing that's a Krogan." I said.

It just shook his head and turned around to face, what had he called it? A turian? This one was also wearing blue like the others I had seen before, but it looked like he'd received some fire a while back. Part of his armor was gone and scorched. Part of his face was burnt too.

"Garrus, what do you think we should do? Take him," Shepard gestured to me, "to C-sec or should we take him to the Normandy?"

The Turian looked from Shepard to me. He said something to Shepard and the man laughed a little but to himself. Then the Turian grew serious again and spoke again.

"Yeah, alright, but we'll need to get him an Omni-Tool." Shepard

said. And they led me off to what seemed like a docking bay. We passed through an airlock and a decontamination unit, of that I'm sure. While we were in decontamination the adrenaline from before had gone away. I was left with the staggering pain I had unknowingly sustained from the crash. I started trembling and alarms started going off in my helmet again. I began to lose focus and I fell to the ground. The last thing I remember before I blacked out was the alarms ringing in my head and Shepard crouching to pick me up.

3. Chapter Three: A Gift for You

I awoke in a simple cot. Sitting up I looked around. No one was there, it was just me. My armor had been stripped and my dog tags were gone. There was a set of clothing on a bedside table. Making one last glance around the room I slipped off the cot and put the clothing on. It was scratchy and a little big, but better than nothing.

I was just straightening out my shirt as the door gears engaged. Expecting Shepard I was surprised to see a Turian enter the room. He looked to one side, and then looked back. The alien said something to me, then held a device out. I looked at it for a moment before accepting the gift, nodding my head to the Turian who then left.

I stared at the device for a moment, before putting it on my left arm, it fit perfectly. When I rose my arm to get a better look at it, the device glowed a soft faint orange. I stared at it for a moment. Noticing what looked like a dial on the faint display I played with it a little. The moment I turned the dial the display grew brighter and larger. But what was more important about the alien technology was that it was in English.

I frowned for a moment, taking in everything that had happened, from REACH to...here. Making a decision to know my assumed savior I keyed in Shepard. The search turned up billions of results, and a few suggestions, one of them "Commander Shepard". This search still turned up millions of results but I scrolled down anyway. After reading through several articles about Shepard saving the galaxy from a sentient race called the Reapers, I came to an article about the commander, written by a Khalisah Bint Sinan al-Jilani. Reading through the article I could tell it was just a reporter lashing out on what appeared to be a galactic icon.

I had begun to read yet another article when I heard the door engage again. Turning to see who, or what for that matter, was entering the room I was surprised to see
>Garrus walk in again.<p>

"Ah, I see you've started to use the Omni-Tool." It said.

That was weird, I thought to myself. How come he didn't speak English before? Why waste his time speaking any other language if he clearly knew me as human and spoke English? Unless the device I was now wearing had some sort of translator, damned quick too. It seemed to be translating as the alien spoke.

"Human, are you alright?" the Turian asked.

"What?" I asked in astonishment.

The Turian put its hand to its forehead and shook his head.

"Let's try this again," the creature said, "I'm Garrus, a former C-Sec agent, but now I work with Commander Shepard aboard the Normandy. The ship which you are now on."

He held out his hand, claw? It only had three digits. Nevertheless I took his hand in mine and shook it.

"Name's Kieran O'Rourke," I said. "I'm a Petty Officer in the UNSC."

"The what?" Garrus asked.

"The UNSC, United Nations Space Command." I paused, "Comon! Don't tell me you never heard of it."

"Never," He said. "Come with me, Shepard wanted to see you as soon as you woke up."

"Alright," I sighed. "Lead the way Garrus? Was it?"

"That's right."

I followed the Turian through the doors into the Engineering deck. Finding out where I was wasn't too hard, seeing as every door was labeled with the name of the room behind it. The alien led me to an elevator and when I entered pressed the button for the second level, the CIC. Or, as I found out when I entered the room, the Combat Information Center. The moment I stepped out of the elevator the ship's AI greeted me, calling itself EDI. I had always thought that AI's named themselves. Then again, I was in a completely different world, no, universe. Damn, that'd be hard to get used to.

Then I thought of Reach, everything that had been happening, the UNSC was losing its war with the covenant. Doubling over I placed a hand on the elevator wall. I coughed twice, almost throwing up, and wishing I had. Ken, Anne, and the new girl, she had left such an impression on me, I'd never see them, or anyone else again. Let me tell you that I don't cry often, and breaking into tears at that moment made me realize just how much I missed them.

Out of the corner of a blurry eye I saw Garrus do a double take when he saw me hunched over, leaning against the elevator and sobbing. I struggled to control myself, taking deep breaths. Shaking my head to clear my mind, I stood again and nodded to the Turian. Wiping the tears away I gave a bleary eyed salute to Shepard.

"Sir! Reporting as ordered, sir!" I said in a somewhat unsteady voice.

"You alright Kieran?" The commander asked, looking a little concerned.

"Yessir, just... had something to clear up." I replied. I stared at the steel flooring beneath my feet, contemplating it's simple pattern before looking up again.

"If you say so," He started. "Petty Officer, I've summoned you here

because we're on a mission, a dangerous one. One which we might not survive." He turned and looked into the Galaxy map, hands clasped behind his back. "We're retaliating against a species known as the Collectors, a race bred for their master's purpose. They've been targeting Human colonies in the Terminus systems. And we're going to stop them, or die trying." The Commander turned around and faced me, I stared right back at him.

"Sir?"

"This is an all-volunteer mission," He started, "And I'm asking that if you would join my team in our service to the Galaxy."

He knew I'd say yes, he had to have. Was I supposed to have an option? I had nowhere to go, my home had been taken from me by the Covenant when some bastard Elite tried to enter Slipspace on Reach's surface. I was stuck here in this universe, galaxy, dimension, what the fuck was I supposed to call it, with no way to go back. We may have been losing our war against the Covenant, I may have been about to die, but I was in a place where everyone knew my name, where I knew that everything I did had a purpose. Here... here I didn't have a clue as to what was going on, only that I was in some sort of ship.

"Sir, of course sir!" I saluted again.

The Commander saluted back. He turned back to the Galaxy map and began to scrutinize it. I stood there a little uneasily, unsure of whether or not I could return to where I awoke. The Commander decided that for me when he turned to face me and spoke.

"Petty Officer, you're personal effects are in Mordin's tech lab," He said. "Oh, and I pulled a few strings, managed to procure your rifle and that little vehicle you flew in here on." He smiled at me.

I jumped in joy and almost shouted.

"Thanks sir!" I started to run towards the elevator, located directly behind me. Then I stopped, I looked around for a moment. Trying to get my bearings on an unknown ship. Turning around I spoke to the Commander.

"Uhh...sir?" I asked.

"It's to the left of the elevator." The commander laughed.

"Thanks!" I shouted over my shoulder as I ran into the Tech Lab.

I burst in and practically shouted at the alien who jumped at the unexpected disturbance. Probably was expecting a calm Shepard to come striding through the doors, but got me instead.

"Where are they?" I said, barely controlling the volume of my voice. "Where are my things?"

"Human. Not Cereberus. Not Alliance either." The Alien shot his sentences out like bursts from a machine gun. "Haven't seen him before. Civilian? No, Shepard wouldn't do that. Military? But who's? Have to ask."

"May I have my things? Please?" I pleaded with the alien.

"Over there. To your left. Are you-?" He started.

"Thanks!" I shouted as I grabbed my things and sprinted out of the room and back into the CIC.

"Commander, where's everything else?" In my haste I had forgotten who I was talking to, but recovered and added the honorific as an afterthought. "Sir?"

The Turian looked over at me and shook his head, he made a noise akin to a chuckle.

"He's like me when I got my first rifle," Garrus laughed.

I smiled at the Turian and looked back at the Commander.

"It's in the Starboard Cargo Bay. It was empty, so we stashed your vehicle along with your rifle, and other arms, such as your helmet. Also, you'll find a bunk and peace there if you want it." he replied.

"Sir!" I saluted.

I dashed to the elevator and punched the call button and waited impatiently for the doors to open. As soon as they did I jumped in, and accidentally tackled an alien.

"You bosh'tet!" It shouted.

Red in the face I jumped up and held out my hand to the misfortunate alien I had tackled. The alien took my hand in its three fingers. Was this another Turian? Maybe a female? I helped "her" off the ground and paused for a moment. Its hand still in mine.

"Are you, a Turian?" I asked.

"What," Garrus said as he turned, then seeing who I had ran into almost laughed. "No Petty Officer, that's no Turian." He chuckled again. "That's a Quarian, and a rather smart one at that, her name's Tali."

"Tali'Zorah Vas Neema," She said, cuffing me in the back of the head as she walked over to Commander Shepard.

"Is she always like that?" I asked Garrus in a whisper.

"Not at all," He replied, "She's actually very nice, but you did tackle her."

I smiled at Garrus and bolted into the elevator. I stared at the controls for a moment before interrupting the commander's conversation with the Quarian.

"Hey, Commander?" I motioned toward the display. "What, uh, which button do I press?"

"The bottom one." He answered.

I gave him a thumbs up and jammed the button. The doors closed as Tali shook her head.

"He seems rash." Was all I heard her say. I frowned, not the greatest impression I could leave on people, or aliens. I soon forgot that when I heard the elevator chime and EDI announce that I was on the 4th deck. She hadn't done that before.

"The rest of your personal effects can be found in the Starboard Cargo bay, directly to your right when you exit the elevator." Her synthetic voice warbled.

I broke into a run, taking only a few strides to reach the door leading to the Starboard Cargo Bay, and my Pelican. The door slid open slowly. I jumped into the room and saw the lovely OD green of my Pelican. As if seeing my Pelican returned to me wasn't enough, she had been fixed. Which I had thought would be damned near impossible. Granted there were several things that needed repairing and refitting, such as the canopy and the rear wings. But her nose wasn't all banged up anymore, someone had taken it off and flattened it out, then reassembled it. It hadn't been painted over yet so the nose looked a little odd, like a chrome bumper had been attached.

I threw my helmet over my head and ran a diagnostics check on the Pelican. While the check was running I jumped through what was left of the canopy and settled in the cockpit. I did a quick prayer, hoping beyond hope that'd she come to life if I asked her too. I held my finger over the switch, just for a moment, before flipping it to the "ON" position. Nothing. I flipped it down, and up again. Nothing, not even a spark. I sighed. What did I expect? I was sitting in a dead Pelican. One that wasn't supposed to leave Reach, but become a part of it.

Out of nowhere alarms blared in my helmet and a klaxon sounded in the troop bay. I shouted in joy and then shut the Pelican off. The alarms quieted and the Klaxon stopped. She was still alive, and for that, I was thankful.

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